DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 188 834 RC 012 105

AUTHOR Metcalf, Ann Rosenthal
TITLE Effects of Boarding School on Navajo Maternal Attitudes and Behavior.
SPONS AGENCY National Inst. of Mental Health (DHEW), Bethesda, Md.
PUB DATE Nov 72
GRANT NIH-1-Fo1-MH-49407-01(CUAN)
NOTE 10p.: Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association (71st, Toronto, Canada, November 1972).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS American Indian Culture: *American Indian Education: American Indians: *Boarding Schools: *Child Rearing: Elementary Secondary Education: Family Influence: Followup Studies: *Mother Attitudes: *Outcomes of Education: Parent Background: Parent Child Relationship: Parent Influence: Parent Role: Reservation American Indians: Self Concept: Self Esteem: *Urban American Indians
IDENTIFIERS California (San Francisco Bay Area): *Navajo (Nation)

ABSTRACT

An investigation of long term effects of boarding school education was conducted among Navajo women who had attended boarding school on the reservation during the 1950's. Subjects were 23 Navajo mothers and, for 17 mothers, their preschool children: all lived in the San Francisco Bay Area. A series of open-ended interviews obtained information on each mother's life history, school background, and childrearing practices. An in-home testing session included a variety of self-image and attitude measures for the mothers and systematic observations of mother-child interactions during structured and unstructured activity. Women who had spent at least 1 full year of middle childhood (ages 7-14) at home without school experience (i.e., neither boarding school nor day school) scored significantly higher than their boarding school counterparts on self image instruments and on a maternal competence scale independent of the mother's age, the age of her first child, or her feelings toward her parental home. Observations of mother-child interactions showed no difference in the overt child care behaviors of the mothers: however, the dimension of "self satisfaction" displayed in children's behavior was significantly associated with the mother's background: mothers with at least one year at home during middle childhood had children who appeared more content. (JH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED188834

NOV 1979
ERIC/CRESS
RECEIVED

EFFECTS OF BOARDING SCHOOL ON NAVAJO MATERNAL ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIOR

Ann Rosenthal Metcalf, Lecturer
Dept of Human Resources
California State University
Hayward, California

Paper presented at the 71st Annual Meeting

of the

American Anthropological Association

November, 1972

Toronto, Canada

This investigation was supported by a National Institute of Health Fellowship No. 1 Fol MH49407-01 (CUAN)

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Ann Metcalf

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

RC 012 105

Approximately fifty percent of Navajo children living on the reservation attend boarding schools. While research has been done as to the influence of these schools on the academic abilities and psychological make-up of the children who attend them, little work has been done on the long-range effects of the schools. The present study focused on a group of Navajo women who attended boarding school on the reservation during the 1950's. These women are now living in the San Francisco Bay Area with their families. The study was developed to investigate the influence of the boarding school experience on their current attitudes toward themselves and their roles as mothers.

In one of his frequent attacks on the reservation boarding schools, Bergman reports from his clinical experience that:

> Among the young adults, who are the first generation of Navajos most of whom went to school, there are many serious problems... I have encountered many mothers who take the attitude that they should not be burdened with their children and that the hospital or some other institution should care for them. It seems a reasonable hypothesis that having been placed by their parents in an impersonal institution contributes to such attitudes, and it is noticeable that the boarding schools provide children and adolescents with little or no opportunity to take care of other children or even of themselves. (Bergman, 1967, p. 4)

That the boarding schools provided an impersonal setting where discipline was strict and where there was little opportunity for acting independently was borne out by the statements made by informants in my sample. The opportunity to develop attitudes and behaviors leading to feelings of self-worth was severely limited in what was described often as an "army-like" setting. What can be expected, therefore, when a girl is removed from her family at age six and kept in a boarding school until she is in her mid-teens?

The sample for this study was drawn from initial contacts with approximately forty families living in the San Francisco Bay Area. It was felt that an urban sample was particularly important for two reasons. First, Navajos, like other American Indians, are moving into the cities in increasing numbers. Close to one-half of Native Americans are residing off the reservations in urban areas according to the 1970 Census reports. Second, Navajo mothers in the cities are expected to raise their children in nuclear family settings. This situation is in contrast to the reservation where there is often an extended family including aunts, cousins, and grandparents who may assist in child rearing. Therefore, the influence of the mother's attitudes and behavior on her children becomes especially pertinent in a city environment where she often has sole responsibility for child care.

Most of the women are married to Navajo men, and the families live in small furnished apartments scattered throughout working and lower class Black or Chicano sections of the city. Sometimes the apartments will be within walking distance of another Indian family; however, there are no Navajo enclaves. Most of the families commute long distances to visit relatives and friends around the Bay Area.

The husbands are either in Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) sponsored training programs or are employed in blue collar jobs. Most have been living in the city for three or more years and were brought here under the BIA Employment Assistance Program, known to the Indians as Relocation. Many have relatives in the city, and almost all families maintain very close ties to the reservation. It is quite common for the family to make a brief visit to Arizona over a three day holiday; it is also common for relatives from the reservation to come to the city for short visits. Most of the women report that they do not like living in the city, and they feel that the reservation is a much better place to rear their children.

For this study, complete data were collected on 23 mothers, including 17 where data were also collected on their pre-school children. The information gathered included a series of open-ended interviews dealing with each mother's life history, school background and childrearing practices. These interviews took an average of three to four hours to complete. The women were visited several times in their homes, generally during the daytime hours.

In addition to the above interviews, a testing session was arranged which included a variety of self-image and attitude measurements on the mothers, as well as observations of their preschool children. The testing session also took place in the mother's home and required about an hour to complete. All of the data collection was in English. I was accompanied during the latter phase of the investigation by a white, female assistant. During the behavioral observation portion of the study, this assistant was in the position of "blind observer", since she knew nothing about the personal history of the women. Therefore, I was able in some respects to lessen possible biases in observation.

The present paper deals with an analysis of attitudinal data from the mothers: in particular, their self-image and their sense of maternal competence. Self-image was measured in part by a 20-item set of statements such as "I am happy", which informants were asked to sort according to whether or not each item was "like me most of the time." They were asked to do a second sort as to whether or not each item was "the way most Navajo women would like to be." This procedure yields a self-cultural ideal discrepancy. Another self-measure was the semantic differential used by Havighurst and his associates in the Indian Education Study. (Havighurst, 1970) Finally, the Cornell Medical Index, which provides a self-assessment in terms of physical complaints interpreted as an indication of personal

adjustment, was filled out by each informant. All of these instruments had been used before on Navajo students in boarding schools.

A sense of maternal competence was derived from an instrument used by Barnett and his colleagues for the mothers of premature infants (Seashore, et al, in press). The instrument asks the respondant to choose which of two people can better take care of her child under different conditions. It is scored according to the percent of time the mother chooses herself as the better caretaker.

I was particularly interested in the effects of events experienced by the mothers in their middle childhood years. Initially, it was anticipated that some women would not have had experience in boarding school before their fourteenth birthday, either because they had attended day school on the reservation or because they had gone to no school at all. Therefore, the original study called for a comparison of women with boarding school experience vs. those with no boarding school experience. But it quickly became obvious that all but two women had spent some time in boarding school. The range of time spent in boarding school was from 0 to 8 years, with a mode of 7 and a mean of 3.91.

However, it was possible to compare the women according to the amount of time spent at home between the ages of 7 and 14. The range of time spent at home with no school experience (i.e., neither enrolled in boarding school nor in day school) was 0 to 7 years. Approximately one-half of the women spent at least one full year at home between the ages of 7 and 14. This figure includes 7 women who did not enter school until after their eighth birthday, as well as 4 who entered and then later returned home.

When these women with home experience are compared to those who remained in school on the measures of self-image and maternal competence, a clear pattern emerges. Women who have had the opportunity to spend at least one full year of their middle childhood with their families are more likely to view themselves in a positive manner and see themselves as competent in caring for their children. That is, they tend to score higher than their boarding school counterparts on the self-image instruments and the maternal competence scale. (See Tables 1-4)

These ratings are not associated with the mother's age, age of oldest child or parity; i.e., they are not associated with experience in being a mother. Nor are they associated with anecdotal information regarding the ways in which home life is remembered by the women; there does not appear to be any indication that those women who scored high on the self-measurement instruments had been singled out by their families as the children most wanted and needed at home. Nearly as many of them indicated negative feelings toward their parental home as did those who were in school full time. Also, the reasons most often given for late entry into school or interruption of the school career were such things as non-availability of space in school, closing down of a school, or simply missing the school bus.

Several women did tell me that their parents actively tried to keep them from having to go to school, but such parental interference (which was never successful) occurred as frequently for those who entered early and stayed as those who entered later.

In order to get at some aspects of mother-child interaction, I devised a series of common tasks such as tying a shoe, buttoning a button, threading a needle. I showed each task to the mother and asked her to evaluate whether or not her child could perform it. If she felt he could accomplish the task, she was to give it to him and let him try; if she felt the task was "too old for him", she could hand it back to me. I included some tasks which had been previously listed by the mothers as hazardous such as lighting a match. The mother could, if she chose, help her child with the task.

The interaction between mother and child was observed by myself and my assistant and scored according to the mother's prediction of the child's competence, the amount and kind of reinforcement used in helping the child with the task, and spontaneous hazard control. There were no differences found between the two groups of mothers on these ratings. This finding confirmed my informal observations of the mothers during my visits with them. I could see no differences in the overt child care behaviors of the mothers as they ministered to their children's health and safety needs or exercised discipline and control over them.

This finding is in sharp contrast to the reports from such clinicians as Bergman, who cite examples of child neglect and abandonment. I saw nothing which even approached the description of family pathology mentioned by other observers.

However, there was a difference in what I would call the expressive domain of mother-child interaction. During a ten minute period, my assistant and I observed the children in a "free play" situation. The mothers were busy with a lengthy questionnaire and the children were free to do as they pleased. Data from these observations were coded as to amount of attention-seeking behavior engaged in by the children in an effort to get at some measure of relative dependency demonstrated by the children.

We found no difference in overt attempts at attention-seeking between the two groups of children, but we were struck by the difference in affect demonstrated by the children. For example, some children whined, cried and sorrowfully sucked their thumbs while tugging at their mother's sleeves. Others would climb into their mother's lap and play with toys while humming to themselves or, smilingly, bring us objects to admire. Both kinds of behavior could be coded as attention-seeking, yet one group of children seemed more contented or self-satisfied than the other.

We independently ranked the children according to their display of "self-satisfaction". The inter-rater reliability was .93. This dimension was found to be significantly associated with the mother's background

experience: those mothers who had had at least one year at home during the middle childhood had children who appeared more contented (Table 5).

Thus, what seems to be transmitted in these latter families is an attitude or sense of self-satisfaction. For the women in this sample, time spent at home between the ages of 7 and 14 seems to have contributed to the development of a positive self-image. Whereas, those women who spent all of their crucial middle childhood years in reservations schools are less likely to have positive feelings toward themselves as persons and as mothers. (This finding is in agreement with the Havighurst study where a drop in self-image was reported for Navajo girls in boarding school.) Indications from the present study suggest that these feelings of self-satisfaction, or the lack of them, are being transmitted to the next generation of Navajo children.

REFERENCES

BERGMAN, ROBERT L.
1967 Boarding Schools and the Psychological Problems of Indian Children (Mimeo)

HAVIGHURST, ROBERT J., et al
1970 The National Study of American Indian Education. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota.

SEASHORE, M., A LEIFER, C. BARNETT, P. LIEDERMAN
In press Effects of Denial of Early Mother-Infant Interaction on Maternal Self Confidence. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.

Table 1. Mother's time at home between age seven and fourteen by score on Cornell Medical Index (High = poor judgment).

	Mother's Score		
	High	Low	Total
Mother's time:			
One or more years at home	2	9	11
All years in school	9	3	12
Total	11	12	23

(sig. at .01)

Table 2. Mother's time at home between age seven and fourteen by Semantic Differential Score, "myself"

	Mother's Score		
	Negative	Positive	Total
Mother's time:			
One or more years at home	3	8	11
All years in school	8	4	12
Total	11	12	23

(.10 p .05

Table 3. Mother's time at home between age seven and fourteen by Sense of Maternal Competence Score

	Mother's Score		
	Negative	Positive	Total
Mother's time:			
One or more years at home	4	7	11
All years in school	8	4	12
Total	12	11	23

(N.S.)

Table 4. Mother's time at home between age seven and fourteen by Self-Ideal descrepancy score

	Mother's Score		
	High	Low	Total
Mother's time:			
One or more years at home	6	5	11
All years in school	10	2	12
Total	16	7	23

(.10 $p \geq .05$)

Table 5. Mother's time at home between age seven and fourteen by Child's ranking on "Self-satisfaction"

	Child's Rank		
	Low	High	Total
Mother's time			
One or more years at home	2	7	9
All years in school	6	2	8
Total	8	9	17

(sig. at .05)